



# DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

EPISCOPAL CHURCH CENTER • 815 SECOND AVENUE • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017

Peter H. Boyd, Press Officer  
L. Drew Dearnaley, Assistant Press Officer

Telephone: (212) 867-8400

81141

May 7, 1981

## ANGLICANS APPEAL FOR BELFAST PEACE

NEW YORK -- Anglican primates appealed quickly for calm in Northern Ireland when the death of hunger striker Bobby Sands, a member of the outlawed Irish Republican Army, was revealed.

Sands, 27, was serving a sentence for weapons charges stemming from the murder of a policeman in Northern Ireland, when he launched his fatal hunger strike in a bid to have IRA members treated as political prisoners. His 66-day fast became a rallying point for sectarian violence and the focus of world attention.

Immediately upon learning of his death, Archbishop Robert Runcie of Canterbury -- traveling in the states -- expressed compassion for him and his family but noted that "the taking of one's own life always raises grave moral problems."

Runcie added a plea for moderation: "I would appeal to all sections of the community not to allow themselves to be exploited for purposes of retaliation or for further violence. Community life can only be restored to wholeness by the deliberate practice of patience, forgiveness and tolerance and by the active pursuit of reconciliation on the part of all.

"The people of Ireland have contributed so much of enduring value to the world. My prayer is that this tragedy will not further divide them."

Runcie's comments found an echo in Ireland itself where Archbishop John W. Armstrong of the Anglican Church of Ireland said from his Belfast residence:

"To his supporters I say: 'You now have your martyr, one more in Ireland's tragic and grisly toll. But do not use Bobby Sands' death as an excuse to add still more to the list of Ireland's mourners.'

"To all others and particularly to the members of the Church of Ireland, I say: 'Remain calm and leave the forces of law and order to deal with any situation that may arise. Carry on with your normal lives as best you can. And pray, pray as never before, for mercy and truth, righteousness and peace.' "

-more-

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024



Armstrong expressed sadness at the loss of another life and sympathy for Sands' family but added that the "death fast" had served "to inflame passion and further divide the community."

Even before Sands' death, Archbishop Edward W. Scott of Canada and Presiding Bishop John M. Allin of the United States had pleaded with North American reporters for a "balanced picture of the events in Northern Ireland" as an antidote to violent factionalism. They said -- with many other commentators -- that Sands' action was "an example of free choice -- of life or death. . . . The same freedom of choice was not offered to victims of the kind of terrorism represented by" Sands and the other hunger strikers.

# # # # #

DP, DX

